



# COEUR D'ALENE BASIN News Briefs

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## **Environmental Protection Agency Highlights**

**Human Health Risk Assessment** - Contact: Sean Sheldrake - (206)553-1220

**Ecological Risk Assessment** - Contact: Anne Dailey - (206)553-2110

**Removals** - Contact: Earl Liverman - (208)664-4858

**Feasibility Study** - Contact: Mary Jane Nearman - (206)553-6642

➡ On December 23, 1999, a consent decree was lodged with the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho to resolve the potential CERCLA liability of Union Pacific Railroad for the railroad right-of-way through the Coeur d'Alene Basin. The U.S. Department of Justice will be accepting public comments on the proposed settlement for 30 days following its publication in the federal register in early January.

➡ After a request from the State of Idaho, EPA has decided to wait an additional 4-6 months before proposing the Coeur d'Alene River Basin site on the NPL. This time will allow the State the opportunity to try and bring an alternative solution to the Basin that includes bringing all the parties in the current litigation into settlement discussions.

➡ Six homes (in Cataldo and Polaris) that are currently served by contaminated individual water systems are scheduled to be connected to public water supply systems this winter.

➡ EPA will meet with federal and state land management agencies to continue planning for clean up of recreational sites along the Coeur d'Alene River.

➡ 16 locations have been selected along the lower Coeur d'Alene River for the placement of land-based informational signs. Installation will occur throughout the winter.

➡ The Bull Trout Toxicity Testing Reports have been completed. Bull trout have recently been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in the coterminous United States (64 FR 58910, November 1, 1999). Bull trout historically occurred in the major river drainages of the Pacific Northwest, including the Coeur d'Alene River drainage. While bull trout are potentially threatened by impacts of mining, the sensitivity of bull trout to heavy metals was previously unknown. Since bull trout are known to have existed in the basin and few studies of heavy metals toxicology have been conducted on bull trout, this was identified as a data gap in EPA's investigation of the environmental problems associated with historic mining in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin. In effort to resolve this data gap for the RI/FS, EPA contracted to conduct the acute and chronic toxicity tests on bull trout.

To investigate bull trout sensitivity to cadmium and zinc, a series of acute and chronic aquatic toxicity tests on bull trout were conducted at different pH, hardness, and temperature conditions. Water quality parameters for the tests were selected to include a range of values observed in the Coeur d'Alene River. To examine the relative sensitivity of bull trout to a more widely tested salmonid, all bull trout toxicity tests were paired with tests on rainbow trout. Both bull trout and rainbow trout were exposed to similar metals concentrations under matching water quality and experimental conditions.

Results from the toxicity tests indicate that bull trout are more tolerant of cadmium and zinc exposures than rainbow trout. The acute toxicity tests indicate that the lethality threshold (expressed as the  $LC_{50}/2$  or the point at which some mortality occurs) for cadmium and zinc at low hardness is near or slightly below the applicable Aquatic Life Criterion. The chronic test results indicate reduced growth and lethality responses in bull trout at a cadmium concentration less than the national criteria at low hardness (1.2  $\mu\text{g Cd/L}$  for acute effects and 0.9  $\mu\text{g Cd/L}$  for chronic effects at 30  $\text{mg/L CaCO}_3$  hardness).

➡ Interested members of the CAC RI/FS Task Force, the WCAC, the consultant for the City of Coeur d'Alene's Cooperative Agreement, and a congressional Regional Director are now participating in technical conference calls.

#### **Documents recently added to the information repositories:**

Field Sampling Plan for the Coeur d'Alene Basin-Wide RI/FS, Addendum No.11A (dated November 22, 1999)

Draft Final Technical Memorandum: "Potential Pathways and Exposure Factors, Baseline Human Health Risk Assessment" (dated November 26, 1999)

Sensitivity of Bull Trout (*Salvelinus Confluentus*) to Cadmium in Water Characteristic of the Coeur d'Alene River Basin: Chronic Toxicity Report (dated December 1999)

Sensitivity of Bull Trout (*Salvelinus Confluentus*) to Cadmium and Zinc in Water Characteristic of the Coeur d'Alene River Basin: Acute Toxicity Report (dated December 1999)

#### **Other Agency/Entity Highlights**

**Bureau of Land Management** - Contact: David Fortier - (208)769-5022

**Coeur d'Alene Tribe** - Contact: Phillip Cernera - (208)667-4119

**Panhandle Health District**- Contact: Jerry Cobb - (208)783-0707

**Silver Valley Naturel Resource Trustees** - Contact: Marti Calabretta - (208)786-2471

The River Bank Stabilization Project at Dudley (between Cataldo and Rose Lake) has also resulted in a rock berm for stabilization on the north side of the river, completed on December 21, 1999. The rock berm was placed in the river for a 750 foot stretch. The berm is designed to catch eroding bank materials so they don't migrate downstream in the winter and spring runoffs. This years pilot project will cost

approximately \$140,000 with one half funded by the State Legislature and one half funded by the mining companies. The northern berm will demonstrate the use of sand and gravel as a “natural materials” base as compared to the southern berm completed last winter which used filter fabric. Bank stabilization work must be done after the lake draw down and before the winter and spring rains, leaving a short work period. The contractor, Stewart Contracting, worked from a barge. Golder Associates designed the berm work and assistance was also received from the Idaho Department of Lands and the land owner of the staging areas.

**State of Idaho** - Contact: Rob Hanson - (208)373-0290

DEQ and EPA are finalizing negotiations on the Cooperative Agreement.

The State of Idaho will participate in the January 5, 2000 CAC RI/FS Task Force meeting to present and discuss opportunities for input on the Human Health Risk Assessment. The Human Health Risk Assessment is being conducted by TerraGraphics, a contractor to the State of Idaho.

**State of Washington - Department of Ecology** - Contact: John Roland - (509)625-5182

**United States Fish and Wildlife Service** - Contact: Dan Audet or Julie Campbell - (509)891-6839

**United States Forest Service** - Contact: John Specht or Jeff Johnson - (208)664-2318

Removal activities continued at the Medimont and Rainy Hill boat launch/picnic areas. Removal action at the Silver Crescent Mill in the East Fork of Moon Gulch is nearing completion with an early 2000 finish date expected.

**United States Geological Survey** - Contact: Paul Woods - (208)-387-1353

**University of Idaho** - Contact: Barbara Williams - (208)885-9436

The final draft of “Demonstration of in-situ metals-fixation technologies on the Coeur d’Alene River, Idaho” is available from the Idaho Water Resources Research Institute. A final report for the groundwater study at the Cataldo Flats area is in progress.

## Calendar of Events

**January 5<sup>th</sup>, 7 to 9 p.m.**

**CAC RI/FS Task Force.** Coeur d'Alene Tribal Bingo Casino (Highway 95, north of Worley)

**January 11<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m to 1:30 p.m.**

**Shoshone Natural Resources Coalition.** Brooks Hotel (500 Cedar Street, Wallace, ID)  
Contact Connie Fudge, 208-753-6022 (group meets the second Tuesday of each month)

**January 12<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

**Coeur d'Alene Basin Interagency Group.** Idaho Department of Fish and Game (2750 Kathleen Avenue, Coeur d'Alene)

**January 18<sup>th</sup>, 7 to 9 p.m.**

**Washington CAC.** Washington Department of Ecology (4601 N. Monroe, Spokane, WA.) -  
contact Michele Nanni (509)838-4912 for details.

**February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7 to 9 p.m.**

**Idaho CAC.** Tentative location, Rose Lake